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AUTHOR Jones, Karen H.; Black, Rhonda S.

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the certification requirements in each state for regular and vocational teachers regarding students with disabilities, disadvantages, and minority backgrounds. It also assessed the perceptions of state vocational special needs supervisors concerning the adequacy of their state's certification requirements. Two questionnaires were sent to each state and the District of Columbia. The first questionnaire, regarding regular and vocational teacher certification requirements, was sent to the certification division of each department of education. A 100 percent response rate was achieved. The second questionnaire was sent to each state's vocational special needs supervisor. The return rate was 72.5 percent. Results indicated that supervisors did not consider teacher certification requirements to be adequate for preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities, disadvantages, and minority backgrounds. Preservice teachers in many states took courses concerning special populations if they wanted, but were not mandated to do so. Required coursework varied from university to university. Inservice training was the most frequently used method of providing support and continuing education for vocational teachers. Supervisors reported that limited state support was available for first-year teachers. (Appendixes include 26 references and two tables that show results of the first questionnaire and a summary of comments and suggestions for improvement.) (YLB)

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TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN VOCATIONAL AND REGULAR EDUCATION: ARE CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS ADEQUATE?

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Presented by

Karen H. Jones and Rhonda S. Black

1994 AVA Annual Convention--Special Needs Division

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TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN VOCATIONAL AND REGULAR EDUCATION: ARE CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS ADEQUATE?

Karen H. Jones and Rhonda S. Black

Vocational and regular education teachers are seeing increasing numbers of students with special needs in their classrooms. Special needs students include those students with disabilities, economic and educational disadvantages, and minority backgrounds. "Minority youth are considered a special population group, not because of their skin color or religious affiliation or cultural beliefs, but rather because of the lack of opportunities and support historically made available to them" (Rojewski & Miller, 1991, p. 25). The following illustrate a number of demographic changes affecting the current and future student population:

- Nearly one of every five children under the age of 18 lives in poverty (Leidenfrost, 1993) and by the year 2001, half of *all* children will have spent a portion of their childhood living in poverty (Conference Board, 1987).
- Thirty percent of students in grades K to 12 are educationally disadvantaged due to poverty, cultural obstacles, or linguistic barriers (Apolloni, Feichtner, & West, 1991).
- Approximately 10 percent of children in school have been diagnosed with a disability which requires special education services (Maddy-Bernstein & Rojewski, 1992).

In fact, the number of students with special needs in the general school population is greater than at any time in our nation's history ((Maddy-Bernstein & Rojewski, 1992).

What does this mean for the educator? It means that regular and vocational teachers are going to have students with very diverse learning needs in their classrooms.

- Seventy percent of students with disabilities will spend a substantial part of the school day in a regular classroom (Lakin & Reynolds, 1983; Ysseldyke & Algozzine 1990).
- Seventy-eight percent of students with disabilities who took vocational courses in their most recent school year took at least one of those courses in a regular education setting (Wagner, 1991).
- Students with disadvantages, disabilities, and limited English proficiency represent 20% of all the students enrolled in vocational education (Pheips & Johnson, 1991).

Several studies have reported the need for vocational and regular educators to receive more

practical experience with and information about students with special needs in their preservice training programs (Crisci, 1981; Eagle, Choy, Hoachlander, Stoddard, & Tuma, 1987; Sarkees & West, 1990; Vier; 1990). According to Retish and Greenan (1991), regular education teachers "indicate that they have neither the time nor the skills to teach mainstreamed special needs students" (p. 29). Teachers often do not have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students from special populations due to a lack of training in specific intervention strategies during their preservice coursework (Wood, 1989). This is also true for vocational teachers.

Vocational education personnel generally prepare to work with students without disabilities and little or no emphasis is given to training in developing strategies to enhance the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Okolo & Sitlington, 1988; Sarkees & West, 1990; Vier, 1990). In one study, vocational educators indicated that their preservice training was inadequate with regards to teaching special needs students (Rojewski, 1990). According to Hing-McGowan (1994) vocational teachers also feel overwhelmed by the diversity of their students and are not prepared to teach to that diversity.

Reports such as these indicate that classroom teachers have *not* been adequately prepared to work with students with disabilities, disadvantages, or multicultural backgrounds in their classrooms. According to Dirkx, Spurgin, Lavin, and Holder (1993), the two topics perceived to be the least understood by all vocational content area teachers are: a) the needs of special populations, and b) multicultural education. University teacher education programs and state certification departments must consider these research findings and collaborate to implement better preservice programs in these areas. Garibaldi (1992) stated "the professional preparation of preservice teachers must include additional academic knowledge related to diversity and multicultural contexts that can be incorporated into their professional education curricula..."(p.24).

Literature confirms that the student population is becoming more diverse. More students with disabilities, disadvantages, and multicultural backgrounds are entering the classroom. Teachers do not feel prepared to address that diversity. Therefore, the present study was conducted to determine: a) the certification requirements in each state for regular and vocational teachers regarding students with disabilities, disadvantages, and multicultural backgrounds, and b) the perceptions of State Vocational Special Needs Supervisors concerning the adequacy of their state's certification requirements.

METHOD AND RESULTS

Two questionnaires were sent to each state and the District of Columbia. The first questionnaire, regarding regular and vocational teacher certification requirements, was sent to the certification division of each department of education. With one follow-up mailing and several follow-up telephone calls, a 100% response rate was achieved (N=51). Results from the first questionnaire are summarized in Table 1.

The second questionnaire was sent to each state's Vocational Special Needs Supervisor. Thirty-seven of the 51 surveys were returned after one follow-up mailing for a 72.5% return rate. The supervisors were asked to respond to seven questions concerning their perceptions of: a) the adequacy of certification requirements for vocational educators in their state, and b) the types of support that the state offers their vocational teachers. Space was provided for comments or suggestions to each question. Comments and suggestions for improvement provided by the respondents for each question are summarized in Table 2.

Question One requested supervisors' perceptions concerning the adequacy of their state's certification requirements for preparing teachers to successfully instruct students with *exceptionalities*. Seventy-eight percent (n=29) of the respondents indicated that the certification requirements in their states are *not* adequate in this area. Nineteen percent (n=7) stated the requirements are adequate, and three percent (n=1) were undecided.

Question Two requested supervisors' perceptions concerning the adequacy of their state's certification requirements for preparing teachers to successfully instruct students with *disadvantages* and who are at-risk for school failure. Seventy-three percent (n=27) of the supervisors did *not* perceive the certification requirements to be adequate. Five respondents (13.5%) indicated the requirements are adequate, and 5 (13.5%) were undecided.

Question Three requested supervisors' perceptions concerning the adequacy of their state's certification requirements for preparing teachers to successfully instruct students with *multicultural*

backgrounds. Sixty-five percent (n=24) of the supervisors responded that the requirements are *not* adequate. Sixteen percent (n=6) responded that the requirements are adequate, and 19% (n=7) were undecided.

The fourth question asked about the kind of support offered to *first year* vocational teachers in each state. Inservice was the most frequently utilized support system (mentioned by 78% of the respondents). Thirty percent (n=11) of the respondents used mentoring and 24% (n=9) used teacher induction programs to provide support. The categories of "teacher assistance teams" and "other" were both cited by 11% (n=4) of the supervisors as a method of supporting teachers in their first year.

Question Five was open-ended and requested information on the professional support offered to *all* vocational teachers in the respondent's state. Twenty-four of the 37 respondents (65%) cited inservice as a method of support to vocational teachers in their state. State-wide conferences, professional organizations, workshops, staff development programs and newsletters were also mentioned as methods of supporting vocational teachers. Several states offer technical assistance through consultants and/or state department personnel. One state offers extensive assistance through team teaching, visits to other schools, and in-house visits to each other's classrooms and laboratories. Another state uses cross-training with academic teachers, summer institutes, mentoring, and teacher support teams.

The sixth question requested information about the kind(s) of continuing education that each state offers vocational teachers. The majority (89%) of supervisors stated workshops as the type of continuing education most often offered to vocational teachers. Seventy-eight percent (n=29) of the supervisors cited local district inservice; 24% (n=9) of the supervisors stated that financial assistance is provided for vocational teachers to take university courses; and 27% (n=10) said their states offer

"other" continuing education to vocational teachers.

Question Seven asked the supervisors to describe the type of support offered to vocational teachers in their state regarding students with special needs. Nineteen (51%) stated inservice in their responses, although some indicated that the inservice is limited. Other types of support reported were: staff development activities, workshops, cooperation with special education personnel, and classroom aides.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Results of the study indicate that Vocational Special Needs Supervisors do not consider teacher certification requirements to be adequate for preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities, disadvantages, and multicultural backgrounds. Responses show that preservice teachers in many states take courses concerning special populations if they want, but are not mandated to do so. Required coursework may vary from university to university and teachers may receive very different kinds of training before they enter the classroom.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) provides three criteria for compliance in its standard on professional studies which specify the inclusion of instructional components that provide experiences related to culturally diverse and exceptional populations (NCATE, 1992). Colleges and universities which are accredited by NCATE are being held to a standard which requires them to include content in these areas. Teachers who graduate from NCATE accredited colleges or universities may have adequate instruction in the areas of multicultural, disadvantaged, and exceptionalities. However, Kearney & Durand (1992) reported that only a small minority of NCATE approved postsecondary institutions in the state of New York required education to prepare teachers to work in mainstreamed classroom settings. Other authors (Garcia & Pugh, 1992; Valverde, 1993) also feel that a one course requirement in multicultural issues is inadequate.

Future research questions may be to compare whether teachers who attended NCATE accredited schools feel more prepared than those who did not; and whether there is a difference between teachers who graduated from programs that require courses and teachers who graduated from programs that have the topics covered in general preparation programs. Several vocational special needs supervisors indicated that universities should take responsibility for ensuring that their graduates are prepared for the diversity they will face in the classroom. They also indicated universities should offer more courses to prepare teachers to work with a diverse student population and should include more practical and field-based experiences for preservice teachers.

Responses from participants in this study indicate that inservice was the most frequently used method of providing support and continuing education for vocational teachers. This is encouraging because Dirkx, Spurgin, Lavin, & Holder (1993) found that inservice workshops were ranked first or second by every vocational content area as the most preferred continuing education activity.

Vocational special needs supervisors reported that limited state support was available for first year teachers. A majority of the teacher support and continuing education is determined by local districts, therefore, there is little consistency even within a state for the type of additional training and support vocational teachers receive concerning special populations.

As shown in Table 1, 23 states require a class in exceptionalities for regular education certification, and 21 states for vocational education certification. In 1980, it was reported that 15 out of 50 states had certification requirements that included *some* coursework "concerning the exceptional learner for preservice general educators" (Smith & Schindler, 1980, p. 394). A similar study in 1984 found that 19 unidentified states required one course on exceptionalities for certification and two states were in the process of requiring such a course (Ganschow, Weber, & Davis, 1984). The present study reveals that in more than a decade, the overall situation concerning teacher certification

requirements has not changed significantly. Twenty-three states require one or more complete course(s) at an approved college or university specifically dealing with exceptional students. Considering the Ganschow et al. study, the findings of the current study are alarming as few states have added the requirement of a specific course concerning students with exceptionalities since 1984. Vocational personnel and policy makers can use this information when making reforms in teacher preparation programs.

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CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF REGULAR AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATORS REGARDING PREPARATION FOR TEACHING:

	# OF STATES REQUIRING SKILL OR COMPETENCY TEST ONLY	# OF STATES REQUIRING ONE COMPLETE COURSE AT AN APPROVED COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN THIS TOPIC	# OF STATES REQUIRING MORE THAN ONE COURSE	# OF STATES REQUIRING NO SPECIFIC COURSE (NOTE: MOST STATES RESPONDED THAT THE TOPIC IS COVERED IN THE GENERAL UNIVERSITY TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN THEIR STATE.)	# OF STATES WITH OTHER REQUIREMENTS
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	21[1] (41%)	2 (4%)	21 (41%)	2 - Additional Inservice
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
	5 (10%)	19[3] (37%)	2 (4%)	24 (47%)	2 - Additional Inservice 1 - Inservice Only (2%)
DISADVANTAGED/ AT-RISK STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	8 [1, 2] (16%)	0	34 (66%)	1 - Inservice (2%) 1 - Field Experience (2%)
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
	5 (10%)	9 [3, 4] (18%)	0	35 (68%)	1 - Field Experience (2%) 1 - Inservice (2%)
MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	15 [1, 5] (29%)	1 (2%)	27 (53%)	1 - Field Experience (2%)
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
	5 (10%)	15 [3, 6] (29%)	1 (2%)	29 (57%)	1 - Field Experience (2%)

1. 7 states require one complete course that addresses the needs of exceptional, disadvantaged/at risk, and multicultural students.
2. Only one state required a separate course to address the needs of disadvantaged/at-risk students.
3. 6 states require one complete course that addresses the needs of exceptional, disadvantaged/at-risk, and multicultural students.
4. Three states required a separate couse to address the needs of disadvantaged/at-risk students.
5. Eight states required a separate course to address the needs of multicultural students.
6. Nine states requried a separate course to address the needs of multicultural students.

Total 51 States - including Washington, D.C.

TABLE 2

SELECTED SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	
QUESTION 1	Question 1 - *From your position at the Department of Education, do you perceive that the certification requirements for vocational educators in your state adequately prepares teachers to successfully work with students with **exceptionalities?*** Two general themes emerged. First, that specific courses should be required with teaching strategies and techniques included. Second, that more practical experience is needed. Comments included: - Only a general exceptional students course is required and administrators and vocational teachers are exempt. - Vocational instructors are ill prepared to handle special populations with disabilities. - Vocational education instructors are in the best possible position to assist learning disabled and mild to moderate students with disabilities. Some specific suggestions include: - Practical experience is needed for teachers who work with handicapped, disadvantaged, and LEP students. Additional course work without practical experience is of limited value. - Increased emphasis on alternative teaching methods (co-teaching, peer tutoring, collaboration.) Courses should include teaching strategies, etc. beyond lecture type. - For college preparation, vocational instructors need to take classes in special education and especially information on inclusion & partnerships with vocational education and special education. Competence in learning styles, state/federal laws, how to make reasonable accommodations. - All teacher education programs need to provide more real, hands-on information and techniques on working with exceptional students. - Additional course work without practical experience is of limited value.
QUESTION 2	Question 2 - *From your position at the Department of Education, do you perceive that the certification requirements for vocational educators in your state adequately prepares teachers to successfully work with students who are **disadvantaged and at-risk** for school failure?* The general theme was that vocational teachers would benefit from practical experiences such as internship and practicum settings that prepare them for teaching students who have disadvantages and who are at-risk for school failure. Comments include: - The teachers only have preparation if they have a desire or saw a need for some preparation. Some specific suggestions include: - Have a resource document on working with disadvantaged and at-risk students. - Students need to have internships in vocational programs, particularly where there are "heavy' numbers of disadvantaged/high risk students. - Classes on integrated services, what services are available, how to work with other agencies. - The current pre-service & inservice training is too limited. Vocational Education teachers need intensive training in order to meet the diverse needs of this population. - Teachers who choose to work with disadvantaged and at-risk students should complete a time block of student teacher with at-risk students before certification.

QUESTION 3	Question 3 - *From your position at the Department of Education, do you perceive that the certification requirements for vocational educators in your state adequately prepares teachers to successfully work with students with **multicultural** backgrounds?* The general theme was that more preparation and more practical experience is needed in this area. Two state supervisors commented that it does not present a problem because "there are not many multicultural areas" in their states. Two supervisors described their specific requirements for certification in their states which include specific multicultural classes. One supervisor "only if an interest exists do teachers have preparation." Specific recommendations are as follows: - A specific course needs to be implemented. - Should have a mandatory 6 credit requirement. - More time needs to be spent with economically and academically disadvantaged minority students. - Provide courses on cross cultural strategies and multicultural studies in the university curricula. - The needs of multicultural students and how to effectively meet those needs is barely addressed if at all at the present time. - Thematic approach could be incorporated into the instructional program to prepare teachers for multicultural students.
QUESTION 4	Question 4 - *What kind of support is offered to your **first year** vocational teachers?* Induction 9 24% Mentoring 11 30% Inservice 29 78% Teacher Assistance Teams 4 11% Other 4 11% [Not mutually exclusive] Many of the supervisors stated that the amount and kind of support depends on the local districts, but that there tends to be very limited support available for most first year teachers. Other - Comments: - Stipend to attend state-meetings, state department has provided grant money to work with first year teachers. - New Teacher Institute - Internship with resource teacher in local district and university person (i.e. teacher education). - Induction program if the teacher is an alternate route teacher. - Lead teachers provide professional assistance.

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QUESTION 5	Question 5 - *What kind of support is offered to **all** your vocational teachers?* Inservice mentioned by 24 (64%) of the respondents Technical assistance and conferences each mentioned by 7 of the respondents. Professional organizations mentioned by 4. Workshops mentioned by 3. Staff development activities mentioned by 2. Newsletter mentioned by 1. State-wide conferences, professional organizations, workshops, staff development programs and newsletters were also mentioned as methods of supporting vocational teachers. Several states offer technical assistance through consultants and/or state department personnel. - One state offers extensive assistance through team teaching, visits to other schools, and in-house visits to each other's classrooms and laboratories. - Another state uses cross-training with academic teachers, summer institutes, mentoring, and teacher support teams. Additional support systems mentioned were: - Curriculum documents and educational materials. - State/federal/local funds for preservice/inservice programs; team teaching; visits to other schools and their programs; and "in-house" visits to each other's classrooms and laboratories; also consultant expertise. - The professional association plays the most important role in a support system. State staff cuts have left less than one program specialist per area, therefore support from us is very limited. - Cross-training with academic teachers, summer institutes, mentoring, and teacher support teams.
QUESTION 6	Question 6 - *What kind of continuing education is offered to your vocational teachers?* District Inservice 29 78% Financial Assistance for University Classes 9 24% Workshops 33 89% Other 10 27% [Not mutually exclusive] One state did mention grants for group efforts and another mentioned "joint meetings with counselors and special needs personnel at the local level." Other comments: - Advanced degree programs with financial assistance. - Grants for group efforts. - Reduced cost per credit hour. - State conferences for credit.

QUESTION 7	Question 7 - *Describe in your own words the type of support that is offered to your vocational teachers regarding special needs students.* Eighteen responses included inservice, several mentioned staff development, workshops, and technical assistance. Other selected responses include: - Voc. Rehab and special education work cooperatively with vocational teachers at the local level. - The state offers the following types of support for vocational teachers: counseling, guidance, member of IEP teams and multidisciplinary teams, employer assistance in school and on-the-job, consultants, funds for attending conferences, workshops, inservice and preservice programs, four courses for special/vocational education certification, and trips to out-of-state facilities and programs. - Some districts have implemented the cooperative consultation model for special education students. - Since the advent of the Carl Perkins II law, we have provided schools with part-time teachers who go into the voc-ed classroom to help S.P. students. - A technical assistance guide for addressing the equal access and program planning assurances required in Perkins was developed & disseminated. A ESL Institute for career and technical education personnel is conducted in August. (Curricular modifications for career and tech. ed. students.) - Statewide workshops on Transition Services, using the team concept. This team will provide training in their local school division transition services. - Special grants are let and special targeted efforts are funded to work w/ special population students.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF REGULAR AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATORS REGARDING PREPARATION FOR TEACHING:

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EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	21[1] (41%)	2 (4%)	21 (41%)	2 - Additional Inservice
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
	5 (10%)	19[3] (37%)	2 (4%)	24 (47%)	2 - Additional Inservice 1 - Inservice Only (2%)

1. 7 states require one complete course that addresses the needs of exceptional, disadvantaged/at risk, and multicultural students.
3. 6 states require one complete course that addresses the needs of exceptional, disadvantaged/at-risk, and multicultural students.

Total 51 States - including Washington, D.C.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF REGULAR AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATORS REGARDING PREPARATION FOR TEACHING:

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DISADVANTAGED/ AT-RISK STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	8 [1,2] (16%)	0	34 (66%)	1 - Inservice (2%) 1 - Field Experience (2%)
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
	5 (10%)	9 [3,4] (18%)	0	35 (68%)	1 - Field Experience (2%) 1 - Inservice (2%)

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MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
	7 (14%)	15 [1,5] (29%)	1 (2%)	27 (53%)	1 - Field Experience (2%)
	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational	Vocational
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